Public Participation
Techniques and Practices for
Thai Municipalities

⊛⊛⊛CityLinks

Letter from the Mayor of Khon Kaen

Rapid urbanization and population growth bring continuous and dynamic changes. This creates problems and various needs that increase the complexities in the Thai way of life. It is no longer sufficient for the people to look to the central government or parliamentary representatives exclusively to solve problems. It is incumbent on municipalities or units of local government to look after the welfare of people in their communities. Local government must also implement state policies effectively. Local authorities must adjust their visions and perspectives in order to create cultural values consistent with the existing and changing situation. Local administrators do not have complete power to unilaterally make decisions impacting the community. Local politicians should understand that they cannot act on behalf of the people in every area. Their election only means the majority of voters have selected them as a representative. These politicians still need to gauge and conduct periodic surveys of the community's opinion. In a democracy, the power to decide must ultimately belong to the people. Constitutionally, decentralization does not mean that final authority belongs to local government. Decentralization only allows local government to act as the agent of the citizenry. Citizens still own their community and in the future they will fully participate in the deliberation and decision-making in the process of self-government.

The essence of government is decentralization
The essence of decentralization is the people

Mr. Peerapol Pattanapeeradej
Mayor of Khon Kaen

Letter from the Mayor of Chiang Mai

Local government organizations in Thailand have welcomed the opportunity to join the co-operative project under the auspices of ICMA, USAID and US-AEP. The project aims to develop and disseminate techniques of public participation to local organizations, especially when involving sustainability of the environment.

To promote public participation, the City of Chiang Mai will encourage citizens to make comments, participate in planning and decision-making on landscape improvements along the bank of the River Ping with the goal of beautification, improvement, sustainable environmental protection and financial transparency under the principle of good governance. We want to create powerful community strength, through networking of the various community groups. By joining collective forces we can create a Chiang Mai that belongs to all the citizens.

Finally, I truly hope that the multi-city relationship among the cities of Phuket, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen and Portland will create systematic learning in order to sustain development and respond to the needs of all of Thailand's citizens.

Boonlert Boonupakorn
Mayor of Chiang Mail

Letter from the Mayor of Phuket

The City of Phuket has taken part in the building of a multi-city relationship with the cities of Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen and Portland, Oregon under the auspices of ICMA, USAID and US-AEP. The former mayor of Phuket, Lieutenant Bhumisakdi Hongyok, initiated the partnership on June 26, 2003. The City of Phuket has greatly benefited from the valuable experiences, especially in fostering citizen participation in city projects by focusing on two activities: 1) strategic planning to improve the Klong Bang Yai landscape; and 2) sustainable protection of the environment through sound financial measures and good governance. Furthermore, the City of Phuket staff has learned many valuable lessons from the partnership and has applied the knowledge in practice.

All the lessons collectively learned by the four cities have been recorded in this Public Participation Manual. I hope it will lead the way for civic leaders and interested parties to put them into practice throughout all of Thailand.

Ms. Somjai Suwansuppana
Mayor of Phuket

Acknowledgements

Editors

City of Khon Kaen
City of Chiang Mai
City of Phuket
City of Portland

August 2005

Preface

This manual has been published with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the auspices of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA)'s CityLinks Program and the United States-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP). Through the CityLinks program, the Thai cities of Phuket, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen partnered with the City of Portland, Oregon.

The purpose of this manual is to disseminate information and examples of public participation techniques to local governments throughout Thailand. With technical advice from the Portland team and environmental officers of US-AEP, the manual has been developed by applying the experiences learned by the three Thai municipalities through the course of the CityLinks partnership. The techniques in the Thai translation of this manual are the same as those described in the English version, but with permission from ICMA the editors from the three participating Thai cities have adapted the contents to better fit a Thai audience.

The CityLinks Program fostered a productive partnership between Portland, Oregon and the municipalities of Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Khon Kaen, Thailand. The goal of this program was to build experience and expertise in public participation for municipal projects; further, the goal was to improve the effectiveness of local government service delivery and strengthen democracy through municipal partnerships. The three municipalities each initiated a public participation process for two projects: a city development project, and a project in which a user fee was established for municipal wastewater management.

City development projects: Each city selected a development project to integrate solutions related to environmental issues such as private encroachment into public areas, land use and environmental management, and economic and community development. Other project goals included fostering entertainment and tourism activity. Each of the municipal projects included a public participation process, in which the public was invited to share their opinions on the planning and design of development in the improvement areas.

The development project areas are as follows:

1. The Municipality of Khon Kaen selected the Rama Theater district for redevelopment. This is a deteriorated area in the middle of the city. Plans are to design and redevelop this area into a vibrant commercial district linked to the public market.

2. The Municipality of Chiang Mai selected the area along the riverbanks of the Ping River, at the Katkaram Temple. Plans are to improve the landscape and infrastructure to enhance public access and area aesthetics.

3. The Municipality of Phuket selected the Bang Yai Canal bank for improvements to address problems with private encroachment, which have affected the drainage system and water quality. Plans are to expand the greenspace along the canal for entertainment, improved public access, and to improve water quality.

Wastewater fee projects, using public participation: Community expansion and urbanization have led to a number of environmental problems in all three cities – especially related to wastewater management. Municipalities must expend huge portions of their budgets to manage wastewater treatment each year. Enabled by government policy (Section 96, the "polluter pays principle" in the Enhancement and Conservation of the National Environmental Quality Act B.E. 2535), municipalities may now impose a wastewater management fee on system users. Through public participation, the municipalities aim to raise community awareness about natural resource conservation and water quality, and encourage pretreatment that will reduce the cost of wastewater management. With a wastewater fee in place, municipalities can benefit by being able to reallocate financial resources to other public services.

From the experience and technical knowledge in public participation gained through this project with the City of Portland, the administrator of the City of Khon Kaen (one of the manual's editors) hopes to spread the learning experience, knowledge and skills to other municipal officials as well. With this in mind, the Thai municipal representatives have developed this manual to use as a training document after the conclusion of this CityLinks partnership in September, 2005. The manual intends to offer a systematic working process and step-by-step guidance to assist Thai municipal governments with effectively engaging the public.

This manual was collaboratively developed from May to August, 2005 with Portland city administrators, Mr. Ron Bergman and Ms. Deborah Stein, who spent one week in Thailand with the Thai staff to develop the outline and contents of this manual, with continuing consultation via email through publication.

Last, but not least, we sincerely hope that readers will add their own knowledge and techniques to apply and create a new dimension of city management for local governance.

Editors

City of Khon Kaen
City of Chiang Mai
City of Phuket
City of Portland

August 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Appendices

1. Introduction

What is Citizen Participation?

Citizen participation is any process through which citizens influence public decisions that affect their lives and the lives of other citizens. The participation can be active, as when citizens interact with their elected officials or the staff of a local government to influence a public policy decision. The participation can also be comparatively passive, as when citizens simply attend a public meeting to receive information on the status of a new government program or when they show up to vote at an election.

The most effective citizen participation brings people together to learn and discuss as well as to give their input, and these opportunities are particularly useful for building a consensus that can be a meaningful guide for government action.

Why Should Municipalities Involve Citizens in Local Government Decisions?

- **To build a stronger understanding of community needs, perspectives and priorities.**

  Solutions can be better designed to meet the needs of the public when the public is consulted at early stages of problem identification, and then throughout the planning and decision-making processes.

- **To build community "ownership" of problems and solutions.**

  Solutions are more durable over time when the public feels invested in them. When members of the public feel included and listened to, they are more likely to feel invested in the outcome of the decisions that are made.

- **To carry out the principles embodied in Thailand's 1997 Constitution.**

  Local governments are now mandated to engage the public in all phases of civic decision-making, from the planning phase through implementation, benefit-sharing and project monitoring and evaluation.

Participation Process

1. Participation in Planning

2. Participation in Implementation/Action

3. Participation in Benefit Sharing

4. Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

The Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook introduces citizen participation principles, techniques and practices to municipal leaders and staff to incorporate into government programs, projects and activities.

Designed to be practical, this handbook includes explanatory text, graphics, and a selection of examples that illustrate how these techniques have been put to use in three Thai cities: Khon Kaen, Chiang Mai and Phuket. Appendices provide more detailed how-to information, including checklists to help with particular techniques and meeting or event preparation.

2. Getting Started

Identify Your Objectives for Involving the Public

To select the most appropriate approach to citizen participation, it is important to identify your objectives. Typical objectives are to:

- **Inform** the public about municipal initiatives and keep citizens informed as they take part in the decision-making process;

- **Educate** the public about a problem, or the rationale for a municipal initiative, and the advantages and disadvantages of various alternatives;

- **Solicit information** from the public to augment other sources of information;

- **Consult** with the public to learn what they know and how they feel about a municipal problem or initiative;

- **Involve** the public in planning to develop program goals, strategies and visions for the future;

- **Obtain responses** from the public about the impact of a municipal initiative on them or their neighborhood;

- **Provide feedback** on how public responses were considered; and/or

- **Involve members of the public directly** in decision-making through participation in on-going committees.

Once your objectives are clear, it will be easier to determine which outreach and involvement techniques will be most effective.

Some Basic Principles of Citizen Participation

The goal of citizen participation is to develop effective citizen-municipality collaboration on a project or process. To be successful, it is critical that all parties involved convey their respect for each other and for the value of citizen involvement and citizen-municipality collaboration in general.

The following strategies will ensure more successful citizen outreach and involvement:

- **Plan, plan, and plan ahead.** Few things are more frustrating than being asked for feedback or involvement without enough time to respond. It can feel disrespectful, as if the participation is not really wanted or valued. Make sure there is enough time built into your public process to provide citizens with a meaningful opportunity to participate.

- **Explain the process, expectations, and time lines up front.** When you communicate with citizens during an outreach and involvement process, clarify early on what you expect from them and what citizens can expect from you. Clarity will help avoid frustration and unrealistic expectations.

- **Go to the people.** When setting up public meetings, look for locations that are convenient to the people most affected by the project whenever possible. Generally you will have better attendance and people will feel more comfortable when meetings are located in familiar and convenient settings.

- **Demonstrate that you are listening.** At public meetings, record the public's comments on flipcharts – this technique provides you with a useful written record of the feedback that you receive at the meeting, and at the same time, visibly conveys that you are taking people's comments seriously. As the project progresses, describe how citizen participation has helped to shape and influence the process and project outcomes.

> **The City of Khon Kaen has identified nine guiding principles regarding public participation:**
>
> 1. Mutual respect
> 2. Teamwork
> 3. Knowledge and ability
> 4. Coordination
> 5. Cooperation
> 6. Respect for differences
> 7. Leadership
> 8. Patience
> 9. Positive attitude

STARTING OUT RIGHT:

A Five-Question Checklist

Use this checklist as you begin to plan a public involvement effort. It is designed to jump-start your thinking, help you make sure you haven't overlooked anything significant, and help you clarify your goals for the outreach project. Once your goals are clear, it will be much easier to determine which outreach and involvement strategies will be most effective.

1. What is the goal of your public involvement effort?

- What will be different if the effort is successful?

- What are you trying to achieve with the effort? How does the effort help fulfill your municipality's mission?

- What are the key objectives of the involvement process? Are they measurable, specific, and achievable?

2. Who are you trying to involve?

- What specific group or population will be affected by the proposed program or project?

- Which other groups will have related concerns? For example, is there another government or private agency whose partnerships should be sought?

3. What information do you need to share?

- In order for citizens to provide informed, thoughtful input, how much of an educational effort is needed? In many municipal decisions there is a need to inform or educate citizens about technical or other complexities inherent in the issues. To get thoughtful citizen input and perspective, municipal staff may need to prepare and present background materials. Take care not to assume the average person knows all about the proposed action.

- What is the most effective and efficient way to communicate that information?

4. **What kind of involvement/input do you want from citizens? For example, is the emphasis on *informing* or *involving*?**

    - If the emphasis is on informing, don't use a process designed for feedback collection.

    - If the emphasis is on involving, think carefully about when and how citizens should be involved. Consider if you want citizens to:

        - Generate initial ideas?

        - Get feedback? (For example, what should a new program include? It may not be appropriate to ask if the program should be done, but the public can help shape the program.)

        - Review and comment on a document draft? A final version?

        - Develop recommendations, approve recommendations, or suggest modifications?

    - Are there different phases in the project during which there are different types of opportunities for citizen input?

    - How will you receive input?

    - What process will be used to review and act on the input when you receive it?

5. **What type of resources are needed and how much time is required?**

    - What staff resources will be required? Have you arranged for the resources to be available for your project?

    - How much time and effort is expected of involved citizens? Are you prepared to communicate clearly to citizens regarding time commitments, meeting dates, and other issues so that citizens who wish to be involved can be well supported in making the effort?

3. Overview of Citizen Participation Techniques

The term "technique" is used in this handbook to describe any method planned by a municipal government to inform, educate, or solicit the assistance of citizens in planning and decision-making.

Public Education and Information

When the intent is to educate and inform citizens, but not necessarily to obtain their ideas and opinions, you may choose to initiate a public information and/or public education program.

- **A public information program** can include posters, pamphlets or newsletters to inform citizens about the activities of municipal government. A program can also include the use of media, including newspaper, radio and/or television, to provide information to the public.

  Well-informed citizens are able to participate in municipal activities more effectively, so a quality information program can be a good investment and will help establish a strong foundation for citizen involvement in decision-making. To be effective, public information must be perceived as objective and accurate, or the credibility of the municipality may be compromised.

- **A public education program** can bring municipal officials directly in contact with citizens; for example, talking with students in the classroom about improving water quality in a local river.

Examples of Information and Education Techniques:

- Posters, pamphlets and newsletters
- Websites
- Media releases
- Classroom presentations
- Community fairs
- Displays in public places
- Public address systems
- Banners and floats

See Appendix C for more information about using media.

Involving Citizens in the Decision-Making Process

A decision to consult with the public to obtain ideas and feedback about a municipal issue or project will require more participatory techniques. Table 1 summarizes several techniques, and Table 2 matches the techniques to the intended purpose. More detail about these techniques, including advantages and disadvantages of each, can be found in Chapter 7.

The public can provide valuable help...

- As you gather background information to understand existing conditions, challenges and opportunities
- As you establish criteria for a successful outcome
- As you test possible solutions

Table 1: Summary of Techniques to Involve Citizens in Local Decision-Making
(See Chapter 7 for more information about each technique)

TECH-NIQUE	DESCRIPTION	WELL SUITED FOR:	LIMITATIONS	EXAMPLES OF USE
Town Hall Meeting	Informal assembly usually held in a public gathering place (recreation building, school, temple) for citizens to provide comments on a proposal or issue	Providing a less formal opportunity to present proposals and hear public response	Logistics of setting up and conducting a meeting outside city hall may be difficult. Not well suited for educating citizens about complex issues	Collecting feedback on proposed capital improvement program in specific geographical area
Advisory Committee and Task Force	Group of citizens appointed to provide advice on issue(s); may be on-going or, in the case of a task force, focused upon a single issue	Inviting feedback at several points throughout a project; testing ideas early before developing formal proposals; gaining support for proposals from community and business leaders; resolving conflicting interests	Requires significant staff time for preparation, citizen training, participation and meeting follow-up; some groups may want to set project direction rather than provide advice; roles need to be carefully defined in advance	Investment committee to suggest alternatives for investing unused cash
Public Workshop	A participatory session to enable public brainstorming, priority-setting and/or creative problem-solving	Identifying shared concerns and priorities; enabling different interests to be heard and discussed; inviting creative feedback; and providing a forum for small discussions	Requires significant staff time for workshop design, preparation and follow-up; requires skilled facilitation for small group discussions to be effective	Developing a shared vision for the redevelopment of a central business district
Open House	An open period of time for friendly and informal interaction with staff to share information through interesting visual displays. Citizens drop in anytime during a designated time period	Providing an opportunity for citizens to learn about a project at their own pace and talk with staff in an informal setting	Requires significant time for preparing clear, understandable displays and educational materials	Display of several alternative designs for a park project
Walking Tour	An active, participatory opportunity to provide information and ask for ideas about a physical place	Promoting a shared understanding of critical issues between municipal staff, local residents and business owners	The number of participants in any one tour may be limited	Evaluating alternatives for improving the design of storefronts in a business district

Note:
Public hearings are another form of public meeting not covered in detail in this manual. Typically structured and formal, public hearings allow citizens to provide comments directly to a decision-making body (such as a City Council). Public hearing requirements for Thai local governments are now being drafted by the Office of the Prime Minister.

Table 2: Matching Techniques to Your Intended Objective

(Refer to Chapter 2 for a discussion of possible objectives for a citizen participation process)

TECHNIQUE	OBJECTIVES						
	To Inform	To Educate	To Solicit Inform-ation	To Consult	To Involve the Public in Planning	To Obtain and Provide Feedback	To Foster On-going Interaction
Town Hall Meeting	●	●	●	●		●	
Advisory Com-mittee And Task Force	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Public Work-shop	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Open House	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Walking Tour	●	●	●	●	●	●	

4. Educating the Public

In any public involvement process it is important to educate the public so that citizens are able to fully understand the range of issues, the public trade-offs of various policy options, and the viewpoints and concerns of various stakeholders.

Often, the basic questions and issues associated with a project may be raised through news articles. However, news articles rarely provide the level of detail necessary to prepare the public to offer informed comments on options and alternatives. There are a variety of ways to provide basic information to citizens so they can participate in a civic decision-making process in a meaningful way.

Framing the Issues

Once key stakeholders are identified, they can be invited directly to a public meeting to learn more about a proposed project or program. This invitation should outline the key problem and major alternatives. The invitation can also describe the implications of each alternative if it is not a complex issue. If the issue is particularly complex, however, it may be necessary to simplify the large issue into smaller sub-issues and to conduct separate meetings or processes for each. For example, a large issue might be broken down into the following kinds of questions:

- Here are some facts... do we have a problem?

- If we agree we have a problem, do we want to fix it?

- If we want to fix it, what are some alternative solutions we should consider? What are the implications of each alternative solution?

- In selecting the solution from the range of alternatives, what criteria should we use to determine the best approach?

- Of the alternatives under consideration, which one best fits the selected decision criteria?

By breaking the issue into a set of questions such as these, the decision-making process becomes more manageable.

Techniques for providing information

- Open houses, community fairs, and displays in public places

- "Background reports" that describe context, issues, and options without making recommendations

- Walking tours

- Informal stakeholder meetings as preparation for larger general public meetings

- Media specials or in-depth reports

- "Blue Ribbon" citizen study groups that report findings to the public

- Attending regular meetings of stakeholder groups or civic clubs and describing issues and problems, with an invitation to participate in a general public process

There are lots of alternatives and many of these can be combined or tailored to fit the particular issue or set of stakeholders. There is not a cookbook approach that works for every situation or municipality, and nothing can replace knowledgeable decision-makers who know the community and can help design the most effective approach.

5. Time and Resource Requirements

Citizen participation efforts require time and resources (personnel and operating) to be effective. Consider the following time needs when planning your citizen participation program.

Schedule of events

- Develop a clear and concise schedule of events at the beginning of your project.

- Include major milestones and decision points in your schedule.

- Provide a variety of activities in which citizens can participate.

- Communicate changes to all interested parties as far in advance as possible.

Lead-time

- When involving organizations in your citizen participation program, recognize that organizations rely on voluntary resources and that they typically meet infrequently (e.g., monthly). Therefore, internal communications between members may be slow. Provide organizations ample time to circulate materials and coordinate responses among members.

Coordination

- Citizen participation introduces an added workload for organizations composed of volunteers. Citizen participation activities should be coordinated by municipal staff to respect the time of volunteers and minimize the burden on participating individuals.

6. Limitations of Citizen Participation

A Valuable Tool but No Panacea

Citizen participation is a tool for improved planning and decision-making. It should not be regarded as a solution to municipal government's problems, but rather an important contributor to solving problems so that the problems *stay* solved. Citizen participation is a complement to existing decision-making processes, not a substitute.

When local government is isolated from the public, citizens may come to regard their officials with suspicion and mistrust. Breaking down these barriers takes considerable time to inform citizens, familiarize them with how government works and the issues facing municipal government, and involve citizens in resolving problems that are of direct concern to them. To overcome the cynicism and distrust that so often characterizes the relations of citizens with their public officials, it's necessary to consistently reinforce the value of citizen views and ideas in municipal decision-making.

There are several ways to get maximum value from the involvement of citizens:

- Find opportunities to encourage positive and healthy interaction among citizens, particularly when there is a climate of suspicion and distrust.

- Bring people together in familiar surroundings to make them feel comfortable.

- Use simple language citizens can understand to explain the issues and what is expected of them.

- Show citizens that their involvement is important and will make a difference.

Obstacles

There are obstacles to the implementation of an on-going effort to involve citizens in local government activities. Of course, citizen participation programs can be costly and time-consuming (for municipal government and citizens alike). An even more serious barrier is the threat citizens pose to established ways of doing things. The involvement of citizens may be resisted in governmental activities that in the past were the sole responsibility of elected officials or bureaucrats. The threat is most pronounced where the involvement of citizens is linked with a shift toward decentralized decision-making.

A word of caution for local governments that have not involved citizens in the past: move slowly into citizen participation by first involving citizens in areas of activity that pose little threat to existing power bases.

Finally, don't expect too much from citizen participation. It is no guarantee that any decisions reached by a citizen's group will satisfy the expectations of all citizens. Citizen participation permits different views to be heard and discussed through an open process, but the mayor and city council will generally make final decisions.

7. A Closer Look at Citizen Participation Techniques

This chapter provides more detail about the citizen participation techniques summarized in Table 1:

- Town hall meetings

- Advisory committees and task forces

- Public workshops

- Open houses

- Walking tours

For each technique, this chapter offers a definition and purpose, a description of the process, and a summary of advantages and disadvantages. The chapter also provides brief examples to illustrate how each technique has been successfully used by a Thai municipality.

Please note that public hearings are another form of public meetings that will soon be required by the law of Thailand. The regulations governing public hearings are now being drafted by the Office of the Prime Minister. Public hearings in Thailand are discussed in Appendix G.

A. Town Hall Meetings

Appendix E contains a checklist for municipal officials on how to set up and conduct a successful town hall meeting.

Definition and Purpose

Town hall meetings are designed to provide information and solicit citizen comments on proposed local government actions, policies, or projects that may affect the public. Meeting dates and times are coordinated with local residents. To encourage an informal atmosphere, meetings can be held in the community or neighborhood (for example, in a local school, temple or other familiar gathering place).

Meetings may be formal or informal. The agenda generally focuses on a single issue. Town hall meetings allow for direct and immediate response to questions and comments, and clarification of facts or ideas.

(Note that this description of town hall meetings is narrower than the definition provided by the King's Institute in Thailand; the latter definition also includes community-sponsored gatherings.)

Process

As an example, a town hall meeting is called to discuss the development of a neighborhood improvement plan. First, municipal staff gives a presentation on the issue, which provides a common informational basis for citizens in attendance. Municipal staff members answer questions posed by citizens and record public comments. Municipal leaders may also be present to hear comments and moderate the session.

Advantages

Because the town hall meeting is typically focused on a single issue, it is an effective technique to solicit, receive and discuss public comments on an issue.
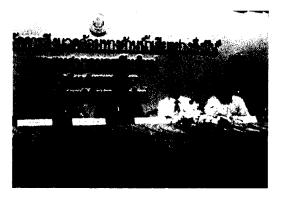
Disadvantages/Challenges

Town hall meetings can provide a public platform for vocal project opponents, who may use the opportunity to rally broader opposition.

Town hall meetings can be intimidating to members of the public who are shy and reluctant to speak in front of an audience.
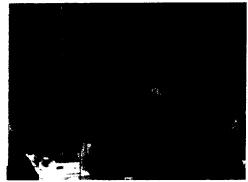
The logistics of setting up and conducting a meeting outside city hall may be viewed as a disadvantage of this technique. However, this can be positive: town hall meetings offer an opportunity for municipal staff and leadership to get out into the community, and this may help change the perception of some citizens that the municipality is out of touch with its citizenry. So, these types of meetings can be a visible demonstration of a municipality's commitment to citizen participation.

The City of Chiang Mai held a town hall meeting to discuss sustainable wastewater management issues on September 14, 2004 at the Empress Hotel in Chiang Mai. Approximately 150 participants attended, including community members, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and government representatives. Municipal staff presented information about the current and projected wastewater situation, wastewater treatment and management expenses, and government policy. This meeting provided participants with an understanding and awareness of Chiang Mai's wastewater issues, and raised public interest in taking responsibility for wastewater management in the community.
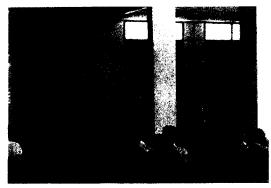

A town hall meeting was held to discuss development along the banks of the Ping River in Chiang Mai through the center of the city at Kanprean Hall, Ked Temple, on May 6, 2005. Participants included residents of communities along the riverbank, and representatives from private and government organizations and educational institutions. At the meeting, municipal staff presented the project's history and described problems along the riverbank, and presented some basic concepts for development. Following the presentation, participants were invited to offer comments and suggestions about the project.

The Khon Kaen City Council held its third public meeting regarding wastewater management on December 20, 2004 at Khon Kaen Public Park. Approximately 300 participants attended, including members of the community, private and public organizations and other interested people. At the meeting there was agreement regarding the proposed collection fee - that it should be based on BOD load (BOD value times water usage quantity). The municipality will draft a regulation to collect wastewater fees from three user groups, classified by their water usage quantity and the BOD value. Housing, the largest user group in the community, will be phased into the program three years following the initial implementation of the collection fee.
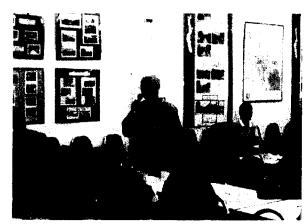
The City of Phuket organized a town hall meeting to discuss landscape improvements for the Klong Bang Yai (Bang Yai Canal) on May 21, 2004 and November 17, 2004 at the Environmental Information Center in Phuket.

The project area is very large and would affect many people, so a series of town hall meetings were conducted for different stakeholder groups. Approximately 180 participants attended, including residents and business owners from the nearby Klong Bang Yai community, fishermen, representatives from industry and educational institutions, students, and others. At the meeting, staff resented the significant issues of Klong Bang Yai and development guidelines, and participants brainstormed ideas for improvements to the Klong Bang Yai. The municipal staff will incorporate ideas generated at the meeting and will prioritize the to guide the project into the future.

B. Advisory Committees and Task Forces

Definition and Purpose

An advisory committee or task force is a group of citizens appointed to provide continuing advice on issue(s) to city council, or to municipal staff.

A task force is a group of citizens appointed to work on a specific objective or problem. It exists only for the time necessary to complete the task. A task force may also be a sub-committee to a larger advisory group and is limited in size so that it can be an effective working body.

In both cases, the selection of members is critical. Membership must be broad enough to be representative of the affected community, yet not too large to be effective and manageable.

Process

Expectations of the role of the committee or task force must be clear to all parties. Putting these expectations in writing is an excellent way to guide the committee or task force in its assignment, as well as to terminate it when the job is complete.

Advantages

Advisory committees and ad hoc task forces are effective in focusing attention on an important issue for a short period of time. They are useful in organizing input from a wide range of people and developing consensus for action on many complex issues that touch upon many facets of the community.

Disadvantages/Challenges

Without a clear charter that defines the committee's role and responsibilities, there is a risk that members will want to expand the scope of their responsibilities beyond their assignment. To manage this situation, a written charter can outline clear expectations, guidelines, tasks and limits for the group.

Disagreement within the committee can also make the process difficult. The charter can provide guidance about how the committee will reach conclusions and how disagreements will be managed.

WHEN FORMING A COMMITTEE...

Be clear about roles and responsibilities

- Is the group expected to make a recommendation?
- Is the group expected to reach consensus?
- Is the group expected to offer feedback only, without making a formal recommendation?
- Are members expected to represent specific constituencies, or are they expected to offer their individual opinions?

Be clear about the duration of the committee

- Will it dissolve at the conclusion of the specific task?
- Will it have an ongoing role beyond the specific task?

C. Public Workshops

Definition and Purpose

Workshops are highly interactive. They offer an opportunity to develop a shared vision for the future and identify common concerns and priorities among citizens. Through group discussions and structured exercises, citizens can work alongside municipal staff to problem-solve and engage in creative brainstorming.

Process

There are a number of ways to design a workshop to serve a wide variety of purposes: developing a common vision; identifying and prioritizing concerns; brainstorming ideas and solutions; and many others. All workshops require a lot of preparation to design participatory exercises to match the intended purpose.

Advantages

Workshops can be fun, inspiring and energetic. Because they are so highly interactive, they are far more engaging than conventional meeting formats.

Small group discussions may help to broaden citizens' perspectives because of the mix of viewpoints represented at each table.

Disadvantages/Challenges

Workshops involve a significant amount of preparation to design the exercises and set up the room(s) to enable productive discussions.
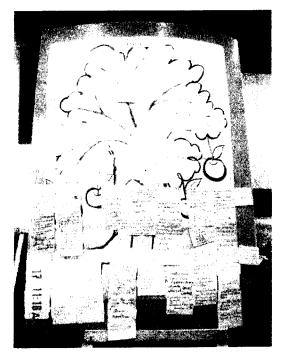
Workshops also are very staff-intensive to conduct. Small group discussions require skilled facilitation to make sure that everyone is heard and respected, no one monopolizes the discussion, and to keep the discussion on track. Staff or a volunteer citizen should take notes on flip charts, in order to keep a record of the discussions. Follow-up after the workshop is important too: providing participants with a summary afterwards provides them with a useful record of the session and signifies that their comments will be considered through the next stages of the process.

The municipality of Phuket conducted a public workshop on March 16, 2005 regarding rebuilding after the December 26, 2004 tsunami. Participants from several community sectors were invited to offer comments and suggestions following a brainstorming model called the "Tree of Thought." In this model, participants brainstorm 1) what they observe (problems and Opportunities), represented by the roots of the tree; 2) what they hope for, represented by the trunk of the tree; 3) what they can personally contribute towards solving problems, represented by the leaves of the tree; and 4) what they can contribute in collaboration with others, represented by the fruit of the tree.

The City of Khon Kaen conducted a public workshop to gain public comment and feedback on their proposed development plan on June 27 to 29, 2005 at Nongkai Grand, Nongkai. Participants included Khon Kaen municipal and administrative representatives, state enterprise, city council, development organization representatives, technical experts, members of the community, and other interested people. Participants raised issues and analyzed and evaluated problems and causes, and commented on proposals to address and resolve these problems. Municipal staff will consider the full range of issues, challenges and requirements raised by meeting participants to further refining the development and implementation plan.

D. Open Houses

Definition and Purpose

Open houses provide an opportunity for the public to become familiar with a project in an informal and visual way. Through the use of displays (which can include maps, drawings, photographs, and/or three-dimensional models), the public can learn at their own pace. Staff can be scattered among the displays to offer explanations of the materials and answer questions.

Process

Open houses can be stand-alone events, or they can be combined with and complement other events. For example, a town hall meeting can include an open house in the lobby, so that as citizens arrive for the town hall meeting they can wander around the displays to become familiar with the project prior to participating in the meeting itself. Similarly, an open house can precede a public workshop.
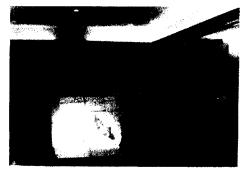
Advantages

Displays of maps, photos, illustrations and/or three-dimensional models may be the most effective way to convey complex information about some projects. Open houses may also provide a comfortable opportunity for citizens to ask questions of staff one-on-one – an advantage for people who may be too shy to ask questions in a more formal public setting. The open house may also be designed to invite people to write comments on the featured proposals, either on the displays themselves or through other means (for example, a written questionnaire or in a comment log).

Open houses can be set up practically anywhere. While a meeting hall or city hall lobby is a typical location, open houses can also be set up in other public spaces (including shopping centers, schools, or temples). Displays can also be erected at a project site (for example, on a vacant lot that is the subject of a redevelopment proposal), as long as the displays are well constructed and weather-resistant.

Disadvantages/Challenges

Open houses require a great deal of preparation to make sure the displays are visually interesting, legible, informative, and durable. Depending on the location, there may be an expense involved with purchasing or constructing display surfaces on which the visual materials can be mounted.

Ideally, an open house is adequately staffed to allow citizens to ask questions. However, a display can be designed to be self-contained without the need for staff in attendance. If this is the case, it is even more important that graphics are well designed to be clear and self-explanatory.
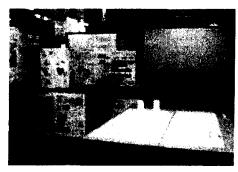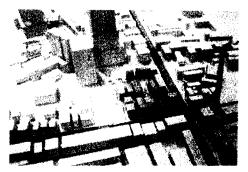
The City of Khon Kaen held an open house for the public to review and comment on a series of alternative designs for the restoration and improvement of the Rama Theater commercial district. Designs were prepared for the City of Khon Kaen by students in the architecture departments of Khon Kaen University and Mahasarakarm University. Students surveyed the district, interviewed community stakeholders, and conducted feasibility studies, and then presented their ideas in eight different concepts which focused on concentrated development through specific area improvements. The community was also invited to comment and offer suggestions at a second open house.

The City of Phuket conducted an open house to display environmentally sustainable development and water conservation programs and activities on August 29, 2004 at the meeting room of the municipal offices. Exhibits and activities were designed to promote water conservation and to elevate awareness of community wastewater treatment. An art competition for school children was held, with the themes "Saving the Water" and "Water is Life." Winners will receive a scholarship from the municipality.
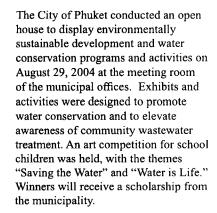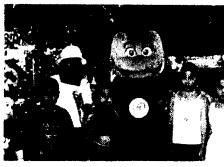
The City of Chiang Mai held an open house to display proposed development concepts for redevelopment of the Ping River banks through the central city and to solicit public comments and suggestions. Development concepts were prepared in conjunction with Mae Jo University for several locations within the project area. Exhibits used several different display techniques, such as photo boards, poster-sized diagrams and landscape plans, and a three dimensional model.

E. Walking Tours

Definition and Purpose

Walking tours generally are a complement to other forms of public involvement, and provide citizens a chance to experience the physical setting of a project first-hand. Walking tours can introduce participants to issues that are best understood visually and directly. They are a good way to hear public comments on a project that will affect residents, merchants and property owners adjacent to the project.

Tours can promote a shared understanding of physical conditions, challenges and opportunities. They also allow residents and shopkeepers to be the "experts" and present their own experiences and information to staff and other citizens.

Process

Like open houses, walking tours can be stand-alone events or they can be combined with and complement other events. For example, a walking tour may be scheduled in advance of a town hall meeting or workshop, to provide greater familiarity to participants about the physical setting of a project.

Walking tours can be conducted with a group, led by a guide. They can also be designed to be "self-guided" – that is, a citizen could go out on his or her own, guided by a printed itinerary, map and explanatory information.

Advantages

Walking tours enable citizens to understand the physical setting of a project in a way that cannot be conveyed through words alone. Information is enlivened by the physical experience of walking around. Residents and shopkeepers can provide tour participants with their perspectives and first-hand experiences that complement data and analysis provided by municipal staff.

Disadvantages

Guided walking tours should be relatively small to allow for people to stay with the group and be able to hear the commentary of the guide. Logistics may limit the number of people who can participate in any one tour. Daytime heat and other factors may also limit who will be able to participate, especially if the project study area is large and takes a long time to cover.

Phuket officials work with fishermen, school children and citizens on improvement plans for the Bang Yai Canal.

The Kaen Wetland is natural area in Khon Kaen with many activities such as bicycle trails, paddle boats, a dinosaur playground, the Hong Mu Mong city museum, a cultural center, and Nang-ning Park. Many people come to the Kaen Wetland everyday to enjoy these activities. A walking tour of the Kaen Wetland invited administration board representatives, municipal officials, community representatives and others on July 12, 2005 to explore the area and enjoy its beautiful views. In addition, participants were invited to become more familiar with the developed recreational areas and learn about water quality management, safety, site maintenance, and to evaluate the satisfaction of users. Participants were able to provide comments and suggestions directly to administrative and municipal officials and community representatives about development and restoration possibilities in their community

APPENDICES

A. Steps for Planning and Implementing a Citizen
   Participation Process

B. Keys to Successful Public Meetings

C. Use of the Media

D. Meeting Set-up

E. Checklist for Preparing and Conducting a
   Successful Town Hall Meeting

F. Dealing with Difficult Meeting Participants

G. Public Participation and Public Hearings in Thailand

Appendix A
Steps for Planning and Implementing a Citizen Participation Process

Planning

1. Identify the key issues

2. Define the objective; relate it to overall organizational goals

3. Determine whether there are other community issues that may affect your process (for example, something else going on in the same district that is controversial and that may be a distraction to citizens)

4. Seek organizational commitment from municipal officials for a participatory approach

5. Consult with others at city hall

   - Coordinate with other departments, agencies, and/or affected governments regarding their involvement

   - Determine whether a neutral facilitator is needed

   - Review schedules and availability of key persons

   - Determine program requirements (personnel and financial resources)

   - Determine information requirements

6. Identify key persons, departments or organizations that will be affected and build an understanding of issues and concerns

   - Develop a profile of the community

   - Identify key stakeholders

   - Clarify issues

   - Interview community leaders

Program Development

7. Draft a Citizen Participation Program

- Summarize what is known regarding issues and options

- Determine the decision-making process for the program

- Determine objectives for each stage of citizen participation

- Design citizen participation opportunities and
  identify appropriate participation techniques

- Establish monitoring and evaluation efforts

8. Meet with key persons affected by the process or program

- Confirm issues and options

- Confirm objectives for each step of citizen participation

- Confirm selection of facilitator, if applicable

9. Finalize program design

- Finalize program requirements (personnel and financial resources)

- Finalize information requirements

- Finalize monitoring and evaluation efforts

- Finalize schedules and work assignments

10. Consult with key persons and other public agencies on final design as applicable

- Analyze results

- Make changes as needed

- Revise the draft

- Determine additional decision-making processes as needed

Program Approval

11. Obtain a decision on final program design and schedule

- Publicize the decision, along with the rationale

- Emphasize accountability

Program Implementation

12. Involve participants in implementation and evaluation

Evaluation

13. Evaluate the program

    • Seek comment from key participants

    • Evaluate the results of the participation program; did it achieve the objectives?

    • Document the evaluation for use the next time a participation process is planned

Appendix B

Keys to Successful Public Meetings

- Select the type of meeting to best achieve your objectives

- Establish clear expectations for the meeting: explain the meeting's purpose and desired outcomes to the public at the start of the meeting, and provide a written agenda

- At the start of each meeting, summarize what has happened in the process so far and preview the next steps

- Conduct meetings in comfortable and conveniently-located places

- Arrange the meeting room to create the desired atmosphere (formal or informal) and to provide the optimal setting for the purpose of the meeting (presentation, discussion, or other)

- Practice before the actual meeting: test out your presentation to make sure the length fits the agenda; test technical equipment and make sure it runs smoothly; and test out sight lines to make sure the audience will have a clear view of the presenter and the screen, if applicable

- Establish "ground rules" for public participation so that the meeting is conducted in a respectful and orderly manner (for example, you can ask participants to hold their comments to three minutes each so that everyone has a chance to speak, or you can ask that everyone has an opportunity to speak once before anyone may speak a second time)

- Show the public that their comments are being heard (for example, record comments on flip charts)

- Make sure that shy people have an opportunity to voice their comments (for example, provide an opportunity to submit written comments)

- Use clear, simple and non-technical language

- Use engaging visual displays: many people are visual learners, and will absorb more information from graphic displays than oral presentations

- Minimize the potential for surprises: talk to key community leaders ahead of time to know where they stand on controversial issues; preview presentations that guest presenters have prepared, so you know in advance what they will be saying

- Prepare for unexpected outcomes (for example, what will you do if attendance greatly exceeds expectations? If meeting participants are unruly? If the technical equipment malfunctions and you are not able to give your PowerPoint presentation?)

At the conclusion of a public meeting, ask for feedback:

- How did you find out about the public meeting?
- Did you feel like your opinion mattered?
- Would you get involved in other civic projects?
- How could we do a better job involving citizens?

Feedback like this will help you refine and improve your citizen participation efforts for the future.

Appendix C:

Use of the Media

The mass media can help educate citizens about important public issues and decisions. Different types of media will play different roles and will convey very different messages about the same topic. The following list describes a hierarchy of media outlets and their ability to convey detailed background information for educating citizens on issues and their implications. They are listed in order of ability to provide detailed information.

- Internet sites: a good way to convey huge volumes of detailed data and related information on any topic. The information needs to be well organized and inter-related with "links" and "hyper text."

- Newspapers – Feature Articles: Prompting a reporter to prepare an article is difficult and you can't always rely on a reporter to be as complete as you would like. However, these can be a good way to educate the public on an issue that has enough "appeal" to entice a reporter to write an article.

- Public Access TV: Same as a feature article in a newspaper, but often limited in ability to get the full story included because of time limitations.

- Newspapers – News Stories: News articles typically only deal with the superficial aspects of an immediate decision and don't generally deal with the implications or impacts of a proposed action. News stories are good for identifying the basic questions, key issues, and notices of meetings or public steps. New stories can provide a strategic opportunity to tell the City's story first, before it becomes a community issue. This will help the community "frame" the issues in a positive way.

- Newsletters: These allow local government to tell its story in its own words, but because of limited space newsletters tend to skim the surface of an issue, very much like a news article (only from the perspective of the local government).

- Radio Interviews: These allow for communicating key issues in a format that enables a casual listener to "get the facts," but do not allow for more detailed study because once aired, the interview is not available for reference.

- OP-ED pieces: These provide a good way for a high profile official to raise key issues within the community.

- Letters to the Editor: These allow a well known individual to raise key issues, but typically these are not read by the general pubic.

- Radio News: Not good for conveying detailed information, other than to announce a meeting time and place.

- General Broadcast TV News: Only good for conveying key meetings and events. Typically these are made on the day of the meeting and therefore are only good for "reminding" people of a meeting.

- Banners, Billboards, PA Systems: Not good for communicating details and complexities. Good for communicating key messages or reminders about public meetings.

Appendix D

Meeting Set-up

The arrangement of a meeting room sets a tone for the public meeting and can contribute to a meeting's success. No matter what, a room should be comfortable, well-lit and inviting.

Level of Formality

Give some thought to how formal you want the meeting to be. A formal room arrangement may include chairs all facing the front of the room, with citizens and public officials sitting separately. This is a highly formal arrangement and suggests to the audience that they are there to listen and observe, but not necessarily provide input.

A meeting intended to be informal may include a seating arrangement in which everyone is intermixed and positioned to invite conversation – perhaps with chairs arranged around small tables or in a horseshoe pattern. In an informal meeting, the moderator or facilitator would be at the same level as the audience rather than on a stage. These arrangements suggest that citizens are encouraged to participate more actively in the meeting.

Visibility for Presentations

If the meeting includes a presentation, make sure that everyone has clear sight lines to the podium and/or screen. Even if the room is arranged for interaction (for example, with participants seated around tables), people can adjust their chairs to be able to view a presentation at the front of the room.

Lighting

Can the room be adequately darkened for a PowerPoint or video presentation? Is lighting adequate for the audience to see displays and/or speaker(s)?

Acoustics

Workshops, in which the participants break into small discussion groups, can be very noisy. Ideally, the acoustics of the room will allow for several simultaneous discussions without distraction. If not, you may want to plan for the discussions to occur in other spaces (for example, in rooms adjacent to the primary meeting space). Then, when the small discussions conclude, participants can reconvene in the larger meeting space.

Displays

You may choose to arrange displays around the perimeter of the room, so they can be viewed while the public meeting is in session. This arrangement can be beneficial, if the displays provide a useful backdrop to the meeting itself. However, this arrangement may be distracting, so think about whether it is preferable to have the displays set up in a separate space (either an adjacent room, or in the area leading into the meeting room). This way citizens can view the displays before and after the meeting, and/or during a break, without upsetting the flow of the meeting itself.

Refreshments

Meeting participants always appreciate refreshments at public meetings. The room arrangement must consider how people will flow from the entrance to the refreshment table to their seats. Is there enough room for a queue to form at the refreshment table, without blocking access to the seats? Can people comfortably move through the room if they want to get up for some more water or coffee during the meeting?

Appendix E

Checklist for Preparing and Conducting a Successful Town Hall Meeting

Pre-Meeting Planning

____ Has a meeting space been located and reserved?

____ Have arrangements been made for keys, seating set-up and clean-up?

____ Does the meeting space have adequate lighting? Can the room be darkened for a slide presentation if necessary?

____ Are audio visual equipment, microphone and extension cords available at the meeting space? If not, who will provide?

____ Are participant handouts prepared: agenda, information sheets, feedback forms?

____ Is a sign-in or registration form prepared? Are there adequate pens and paper?

____ Are name tags needed?

____ Are signs posted to direct participants to the correct building/meeting room?

____ Are refreshments being provided?

____ Are flip charts, easels, markers and paper available in the meeting room?

____ Have facilitators, note takers and presenters been assigned?

____ Do other local officials who plan to attend know their roles?

____ Make sure flip charts and other audio visual aids can be seen by the participants in the room.

____ Keep presentation as short as possible (15 minutes maximum is a good rule of thumb).

____ Provide maps, clear instructions and signs to break-out rooms for small group discussions, if needed.

Meeting Notification

____ Have key community members, municipal officials, and municipal staff been contacted regarding the meeting?

____ Have the news media been contacted?

At the Meeting

____ Is the room arranged to enable discussion between participants, if that is the purpose of the meeting?

____ Introduce presenters and clarify the role of the meeting facilitator, if used.

____ Review the agenda and rules of the meeting.

____ Ensure that meeting participants understand and accept the objective of the meeting.

____ Start on time and finish on time. Advise participants at the beginning of the meeting how long the meeting will last and expected time to adjourn.

____ Encourage participants to complete and turn in meeting evaluation forms.

____ Make sure that participants leave the meeting knowing what has been accomplished and what will happen next.

After the Meeting

____ Transcribe flip charts and meeting notes.

____ Add names from registration to mailing list.

____ Make copies of notes or summaries of the meeting available as soon as possible.

Appendix F

Dealing with Difficult Meeting Participants

Public meetings can be stressful to manage – particularly when you encounter people who are confrontational and disruptive.

Here are some strategies for dealing with three types of difficult people: the "attacker," the "interrupter," and the distracter."

The "Attacker"

Sometimes people will challenge you as the presenter and make you part of the problem. This behavior is intended to either push you towards their view of the right course, or eliminate the obstacle you represent. There can be no subtleties with an attacker. As a presenter, you may perceive this behavior as a personal attack, but to the attacker, the behavior is just a means to an end.

Your goal: command respect.

Suggested strategies:

- Hold your ground – Stay put. Do not change your position, whether you happen to be standing, sitting, leaning, or making up your mind. Silently look the attacker in the eyes, and shift your attention to your breathing.

- Interrupt the attack – The best way to interrupt anyone, whether they are yelling or not, is to evenly say their name over and over until you have their attention.

- Quickly rephrase the attack into something you can agree with, such as: "I know you're frustrated by ...."

- Target your position and focus on future cooperation – Your position should be no more than two sentences, such as: "I hear you're having a problem with the way this is being done. But I am not willing to discuss it if this is how you are going to talk to me. When you are ready to speak to me with respect, I will take all of the time you want to discuss it."

The "Interrupter"

Sometimes people will make comments from the back or middle of the room without asking for permission to speak. This interrupts the meeting and the flow of information.

Your goal: bring the interrupter out of hiding.

Suggested Strategies:

- Stop, Look, Repeat – Because of something that is said or the way something is said, it seems to you that someone is taking a shot at you, STOP – even in the middle of a sentence or word. Interrupt yourself. Now LOOK at the interrupter. Stare that person in the eyes. Then REPEAT the comment, such as: "So, I heard you say that..........."

- Now, use a probing question (for example, "When you say that, what are you really saying?" or "What does that have to do with this?"). Your purpose is to probe for what's bothering the person.

- If the interrupter becomes an attacker, use the attacker techniques described above.

The "Distracter"

Many times in public meetings, a citizen will make a comment or suggest an idea that has general merit but is not on topic and would divert the group from what is being discussed. A good technique for dealing with this situation is to record these comments on a flip chart (referred to as a "parking lot") for future consideration.. With this technique you can acknowledge the comment or idea, but still keep the group focused on its task.

Your goal: acknowledge the comment and reserve it for future consideration.

Suggested strategies:

- "That's a good idea, but it's not quite focused on our topic. Let's record it so we won't forget it."

- Record the comment on the designated sheet for a "parking lot" of good ideas, and then return to the discussion.

Appendix G

Public Participation and Public Hearings in Thailand

The 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (B.E. 2540) is regarded as "the Constitution for the People" because, unlike earlier constitutions, it provides for public participation through a number of provisions that address:

- access to information

- expressing opinions

- the initiative process

- voting

- participation in civic life

- the right of oversight through petitions, legal proceedings and recall

Section 59 of the new Constitution provides citizens with the opportunity to give testimony in public hearings. At this time (July 2005), legislation has not yet been enacted to support these provisions. However, the Public Hearing Act has been drafted and is currently under consideration by the Office of the Council of State. Pending enactment of this new legislation, public hearings are conducted under three existing Thai laws: the Industrial Product Standards Act, the Agricultural Land Reform Act, and the City Planning Act.

The Thai version of this manual includes an article entitled "Proposal for Public Hearing Procedure for the People of Thailand (Part 1)," written by Dr. Nattawat Braramanundha, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University. The article was originally published in www.pub-law.net/article/ on July 13, B.E. 2548 (2005).

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